

# PHILOSOPHICAL PRACTICE

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## Philosophical Counseling and Philosophy

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### Abstract

While each of the different approaches to philosophical counseling has its own goals and methods of practice, it is important for them to cite the philosophical source for their methods. It is clear that those who follow model of Philosophical Midwifery acknowledge that their method presupposes the study of the Self. It has its roots in both Homeric and Platonic thought, and is designed to uncover unsuspected false beliefs about the Self, which they call the pathologos. The choice of which dialogue of Plato's to use for this analysis will be Plato's *Parmenides* because the role of the Self is central to that work, and it expresses Socrates' own claim that the Idea (adoz) of the Self is most central to his own thinking as well. Among these hypotheses, the sixth is most likely to be a match for the pathologos. The sixth hypothesis defines the realm of non-Being, which is the realm in which fictions are described as having their mode of existence.

**Keywords:** *Philosophical Midwifery, Plato, Parmenides, Self, Logos, pathologos.*

While each of the different approaches to philosophical counseling has its own goals and methods of practice, is it not important for them to cite the philosophical source for their methods? It is clear that those who follow the model of Philosophical Midwifery acknowledge that their method presupposes the study of the Self, has its roots in both Homeric and Platonic thought, and is designed to uncover unsuspected false beliefs about the Self, which they call the pathologos.

However, before we proceed, we need to express the pathologos not in particular terms but in the most general. It defines a general behavior within families in the face of imagined threats.

Consider the joy parents experience as they watch the spontaneity and freedom in their young child. This joy soon ends in worry because the family realizes that the child needs to be protected from those outside the family who could take advantage of that openness and freedom. The family always seeks to protect its members from hostile intrusions and challenges to its unity.

Each family has an unspoken vision about what it is to be part of the family; they have a sense of the boundaries within which the life of the family can be played out. It is as if each family has its own religion where the parents are the high priests and reign over the family. The parent intuitively sees that the early freedom and spontaneity of the child will threaten the ways of being that are tolerated within the family if that behavior is allowed to continue unchecked. When they see the child in that state of freedom and joy they believe it is necessary to end that state of mind; they seize upon the occasion to depreciate what the child is doing, and in so doing they give the appearance of being most lofty, most sincere, kind, trusting, caring, and knowing. The child is overcome in experiencing this rare event, and they accept unquestioningly that they were wrong in what they were doing, and they most likely will not return to that former activity, believing that is what the issue was. They come to an unarticulated conclusion within themselves. The conclusion they come to

is always a false belief about themselves; it is a pathologos. The scenes of these transmissions of the pathologos become the personal archetype for all those qualities, and the words used by the parents become the cornerstone of the child's personal beliefs and attitudes.

By contrast to all that was previously understood, the child now is depreciated and is seen in a new way, as a new reality. Since they couldn't save what they had been doing, they give it up and stay within the limits of the family. They realize they must not enter into that former state of freedom if they are to be accepted in the family-clan. The giving up was a sacrifice, a willingness to give up what was treasured and a source freedom. The child suffers the injustice, but their parents shared a secret of what they themselves had learned in their youth. In that sharing they become a member of a common belief. The child then makes a wordless conclusion that they are inferior and that they must conform to the new order. The wordless conclusion lives as a feeling and an attitude about their new role, and when expressed it is the false belief about themselves. Simply, our irrational fear of freedom harbors all the strategies of repression both within the family and society.

The pathologos in Philosophical Midwifery has no reality, it is a fiction; it has a mode of existence, has a power, has a very precise way of functioning, and has an origin and dissolution. It proceeds with its own kind of logic, and proceeds from its own premises, which are accepted as being unconditionally true. It can only be dissolved through discovering that its roots are the unsuspected false beliefs about the Self. We have called it a psychic parasite since it feeds off its host. It has a oneness, and has a unity of parts; it can be recognized and known, and carries out its own irrationality with apparent impunity.

Philosophical Midwifery has described itself as being both Homeric and Platonic, and while evidence has been put forward that justifies its close connection with the Homeric, there has not been a similar argument for it being Platonic. Again, in Philosophical Midwifery the central role of the idea of the pathologos, or the role of unsuspected false beliefs about the Self, has been defined without the slightest justification that this idea, or its parallel, can be found in Plato. However, if these ideas of the Self and the pathologos can be found in Plato, they should be playing a significant role in his system rather than a secondary role. If not, the claim that these ideas are Platonic can be dismissed.

The choice of which dialogue of Plato's to use for this analysis will be Plato's *Parmenides* because the role of the Self is central to that work, and it expresses Socrates' own claim that the Idea (adoz) of the Self is most central to his own thinking as well. For, Socrates does admit in the beginning of this dialogue that he has a puzzle: he wonders if it is necessary to speak of the Idea of Self just as we do about other Ideas. He says that it troubles him, and he runs away rather than think all ideas—such as hair, mud, and dirt—truly have to exist. Socrates is brought to further reason that if it makes any sense to say the Self is like other Ideas that we experience and share in, then must not all things be ideas, and must they not think? Again, later in the dialogue, Socrates is brought to confront a more fundamental puzzle when Parmenides contrasts Socrates' puzzling with someone who has the greatest doubt of his own philosophical claims. The doubter, whose doubt would never lose its hold, asserts that Ideas are separate and distinct from one another. Of course, the Ideas would include Beauty, Justice, and Goodness, and their shadow is experienced in the world of things. Parmenides summarized this idea, saying, "then neither can things be like the Idea nor the Idea like the thing." Further, the doubter believes that not only does each of those Ideas have its own self-identity, or self-nature, but that the Self itself cannot be known.

As for Plato's *Parmenides*, the scope of its metaphysics is expressed clearly when Parmenides is asked to share with those present in the dialogue what his own hypothesis is. In reply Parmenides says that his own hypothesis is the OneSelf, whether the One is or is not. The importance of the compound, OneSelf, follows when he explores his hypothesis and shows that the negatives attributed to the One are then transferred to the Self. As Parmenides explores his hypothesis with Aristotles we find that Aristotles agrees with what is said about the One, but when Parmenides applies these arguments about the One to the Self, then Aristotles says that it "does not appear to be in this way."

The following eight arguments of *Parmenides* demonstrate how the Idea of Self and its denial is likely and unlikely. Each argument is not called a hypothesis, but tradition has been such that translators insert the term into their translations. However, whether the idea of the pathologos can be matched with any of these other 'hypotheses' is still the question to be answered.

Among these hypotheses the sixth is most likely to be a match for the pathologos. The sixth hypothesis defines the realm of non-Being, which is the realm in which fictions are described as having their mode of existence. The sixth hypothesis argues for the necessity, or the metaphysical grounds, for the existence of human problems, as the second hypothesis argues for the state of mind free of such problems. If the nature of the pathologos is a fiction and exhibits the same distinctions as found in the sixth hypothesis, then the similarity or identity exists between the pathologos and the sixth hypothesis. If this is the case, then Philosophical Midwifery is both an expression of Platonic thought and its idea of the pathologos corresponds to the sixth hypothesis.

Let us compare the two by stating the properties of the pathologos and matching it with that of the sixth hypothesis.

Accordingly, we will outline the fundamental ideas of the sixth hypothesis, and match them with the richness of the basic ideas of the pathologos. The statements made in a regular font represent the view of the pathologos, while the statements in italics will be drawn from the text of the sixth hypothesis.

The primary insight into the pathologos must be that the pathologos belongs to the Self. It is not some alien thing separate from one's life but draws upon everything of the learning that was the source of the pathologos.

*Of the One that is not, it is reasonable it belongs to the Self. (160d3)*

The pathologos state lives side by side with the realization that it is different and unlike those times when escape for even a short time is possible. For, the suffering played out by one's pathologos is evidence that it is something different and not wanted as a part of oneself.

*If the One is not, that non-Being is Other (different) from the Others. (160c8)*

Since the pathologos is a learned belief it is a kind of knowledge that the Self has of the way the pathologos functions within itself. During an episode of the pathologos there is an awareness that what is happening is so familiar, yet it is difficult to reverse it. This is an awareness of the Self acting out its unsuspected false belief about the Self.

*What must be, if the One is not, in the following way: Thus, on the one hand, as it is reasonable, this must belong to the Self; first of all, there must be knowledge of the Self, or else, nothing which is said will be recognized/known, when one says, if One is not. (160d2-3)*

So, it is evident that the pathologos, being a oneness and functioning autonomously, is other from all else and from the Self.

*Is this not also the case then, that the Others must be Other (different) from the Self. (160d5)*

The pathologos does not arbitrarily make up its terms, yet they are non-real since each stands as a metaphor whose meaning is always particular. It could better be said that they stand for this, or that, or those, or them, so that the pathologos participates in these unreal terms.

*And certainly, the Being that is not-One, must participate of that and of a certain One and of this and in relation to this and of these and all such as these. (160e2)*

Is there any necessity, or condition, in respect to the Self for the pathologos to exist along with the Self? Since the pathologos, being unlike the One, or Self, the property of unlikeness will also be in the One, or the Self. Now, the Idea of otherness functions on two levels - it can be simply be what is other than the One or it can be other than the other, which can also be called the One that is not, or the pathologos. In either case, their non-existence underlies the One so that the Self shares in that non-existence, which we also say is the One that is not.

*Certainly then, unlikeness will also be in the One, according to which, the Others will be unlike in relation to the Self.” (161b3)*

What is it that maintains the pathologos, and even passes it along from generation to generation? It has an amazing power that persists unchanged through countless scenes. We seldom ask what condition there must be for the Self or the pathologos to maintain its existence? For each to continue to be what they are there must be something that holds them together over time. Whatever it is, it must be totally different from elements of the Self or the pathologos. It must possess a kind of bond that maintains itself for it to continue being what it is. The binding power that keeps each as it is must be other than what it is since it must contain it. Therefore, non-Being is the bond that keeps the Self as it is, just as the bond of Being must hold fast the pathologos so that it may continue to be what it is.

*Accordingly then, the Self must possess the bond of that which is not, in order to be non-Being, if it is going to not Be; Just as, in a similar way, the Being must possess the bond to not be non-Being, in order that it may in turn perfectly be such as it is. For in this way, especially, both the Being will Be, and the non-Being will not Be; (162a7)*

Curiously, this thinking leads us to say that the Self participates in the pathologos and allows a false image of itself to intrude upon itself. The reason for this is that only in one's youth can such a false image of oneself come into existence, because the condition for there to be a problem is that in the transmission scene the youth is confronted with authorities as if they are wise, caring, beautiful, and knowing. That is to say, the condition for a problem is that those appearing so virtuous are the origin of all vice.



In the state of being in the pathologos there is clearly a kind of reasoning functioning, but it is a limited kind of recursive reasoning. Since it is contained within itself, its thinking spins out its drama; it is incapable of true reasoning about its own origin and the conditions of its being a non-Being thing. Thus, the pathologos participates in this false recursive kind of reflected thinking, called *non-ousia*, while the most rational property of reflecting upon oneself is recursive and, in Greek, is called *ousia*. Thus, for the pathologos to exist it must also spring from an *ousia*-like activity to be able to form itself on the model of a fictitious belief.

*Furthermore, on the one hand, the non-Being participates non-Ousia, in order that it may be non-Being; whereas as on the other hand, non-Being participates of Ousia, in order that it may be, non-Being; whereas on the other hand, non-Being participates of Ousia, in order that it may be, non-Being, if in turn, it will also perfectly not be, the non-Being. (162b)*

While the steadfast nature of the pathologos is evident, it is not possible while experiencing the pathologos to be able to grasp the nature of the Self or its function in real Being. It should be acknowledged that the Idea of real Beings includes the major Ideas of the paradigm—Logos, Beauty, Justice, Goodness—and those terms that can specify how these Ideas relate to one another. They have their own mode of Being; they are eternal and the source of their manifestation in our realm.

*Certainly then, neither will it turn about in the Self, for it will not grasp the Self in any way. (162d1)*

Again, continuing to a conclusion,

*Therefore it is impossible for non-Being to reside in any of the real Beings. (162d2)*

The pathologos is a unity of parts, each part fitting precisely with others, and it maintains its existence so long as it is not challenged in a fundamental way. However, within itself it can move, its parts have a dynamic. It can shift the roles of its key members so long as the changes maintain the metaphoric content of the pathologos, because each of the roles in the pathologos represent the key players in the transmission scene.

*Accordingly then, the One that Is not, as it was shown, both stands-still and is moved. (162e5)*

Thus, the pathologos is a one of parts that are not, and it has a mode of existence since it does exist as a fiction. It can be spoken of as being generated and dissolved, but only in a figurative sense because it has no parents, nor does it suffer any death. Only in one sense can it be spoken of as having been generated, and equally it has an end as if a death, so that it both comes into existence and is dissolved, and does not. If the pathologos is not altered it will remain as it is, neither being generating nor being dissolved. In the summary ending of the sixth hypothesis he says:

*Accordingly then, on the one hand, the One which is not, by being altered, will be generated and dissolved, but on the other hand, by not undergoing alteration, it will not be subject to either generation nor dissolution. And, thus, the one that is not will be generated and dissolved. (163b2)*

After puzzling through these arguments it may become clear that the pathologos can be identified as corresponding to the sixth hypothesis. If that is so, then the possibility of the meaningfulness of the second hypothesis can be addressed. For, these negative arguments are designed to show the necessity for the existence of the positive, which in this case is the second hypothesis. The second hypothesis stands to the Idea of the Good as the first hypothesis stands to the Good, or the OneSelf. The second is noted as being the realm of real Beings—of Beauty, Goodness, Justice and such. In Plato's *Republic* it is called the most brilliant light of Being, and in and from that experience one can infer the presence of these very Ideas. The third hypothesis places the intelligible nature of the One functioning within the gap between successive moments to bring about the ordered changes of our existence. The seventh follows if the third is denied.

The fourth reveals a class that has the features of group identity without direct participation in the real, as the eighth urges that the consequences of denying the fourth are ruinous. The fifth separates the One or the Self from all else, creating a stark dualism as the ninth traces the consequences of rejecting the fifth.

Clearly, the Idea of the Self is central to Plato, and the hypotheses of the Parmenides outline the unnamable and unknowable Self, and how it is both likely and unlikely. Thus, the objection of Aristotles is answered.

For philosophy, Philosophical Midwifery continues the Platonic-Homeric tradition and recognizes that it is part of that movement that seeks to return to the classical thought of the Hellenics. Its methods are intellectual and contemplative; it uses dreams and daydreams for insights to dissolve personal fictions.

It will be shown that it is a leading spiritual force that promotes the enlightenment of mankind. Within its scope it offers the continuation of Plato's dialectic as outlined in his *Parmenides*, it reaches out for its kinship with the Christian tradition through the Gospel of Thomas, and offers a way to end the irrationality so pervasive among mankind.

**Pierre Grimes**, Ph.D., is the founder of the philosophical counseling movement. His mode of philosophical counseling, Philosophical Midwifery, is an adaptation of Homeric and Socratic midwifery. The name 'Philosophical Midwifery' comes from Plato's *Theatetus*. He is founder and President of the Noetic Society, for the study of dialogue and the dialectic. When the Noetic Society was incorporated in 1978, he became the Director of its Philosophical Midwifery Program. Pierre has authored numerous video-lectures and publications, and has given presentations both nationally and internationally. In 1983 Pierre was given the name Hui-An and sealed as the Dharma Successor to Chong-An (who was later given the name Myo-Bong) of the Chogye Buddhist order of Korea. Myo-Bong is the Patriarchal Dharma Successor of Venerable Hye-Am, the 33rd patriarch from Lin Chi. Pierre is on the Board of Directors of the APPA.

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# PHILOSOPHICAL PRACTICE

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### Aims and Scope

*Philosophical Practice* is a scholarly, peer-reviewed journal dedicated to the growing field of applied philosophy. The journal covers substantive issues in the areas of client counseling, group facilitation, and organizational consulting. It provides a forum for discussing professional, ethical, legal, sociological, and political aspects of philosophical practice, as well as juxtapositions of philosophical practice with other professions. Articles may address theories or methodologies of philosophical practice; present or critique case-studies; assess developmental frameworks or research programs; and offer commentary on previous publications. The journal also has an active book review and correspondence section.

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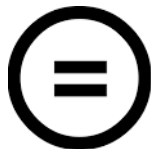
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